

# Army Medical Specialist Corps begins new tradition

Story and photo by Andricka Hammonds  
Brooke Army Medical Center Public Affairs

The Army Medical Specialist Corps began a new tradition Aug. 24 with a welcome ceremony for 18 of its newest medical specialist officers at the Army Medical Department Museum.

Medical specialists from all over the world, including some retirees of the field, attended the ceremony.

“We wanted to have something that will foster belonging early,” said Maj. Julie Hudson, AMSC executive officer. “We are one corps and part of a bigger picture.”

The medical specialist corps includes occupational therapists, physical therapists, dieticians and physician assistants.

During the ceremony, the new medical specialists were presented a letter from Col. Bonnie DeMars, chief of AMSC; a coin bearing the corps motto, “United in the Mission of Serving Soldiers;” and a “calling” card symbolizing the new officers belong to something bigger than themselves.

DeMars said it is important for Soldiers and military leaders to know that medical specialists are combat multipliers, and their skills and expertise contribute immensely to mission success.

“I challenge you to communicate your value to Soldiers through your delivery of compassionate and competent care, which is so vital to accomplish the mission,” said DeMars.

The AMSC vision is to be America’s pre-eminent allied health professionals, from the battlefield to the board room. Their mission is to apply the corps’ unique skills to maximize health and enhance readiness of warriors across the full spectrum of operational missions and environments.

“You have a very important job with serious responsibilities,” said DeMars.



Physician’s assistant 2nd Lt. Jason Orr, A Company, 187th Medical Battalion, speaks with occupational therapist 1st Lt. Christopher Ebner, Headquarters Headquarter Company, Brooke Army Medical Center, about his experiences in the Army Medical Specialist Corps. Orr was welcomed Wednesday during the first AMSC welcome ceremony organized by Corps Chief Col. Bonnie DeMars at the Army Medical Department Museum.

“Each one of you is now part of a highly competent and passionately dedicated team of AMEDD officers.

“You will find that the work will demand a lot from you, but there is no doubt that the rewards will be far greater than you can ever imagine,” she said.

Cpl. J.R. Martinez, a Soldier being treated at Brooke Army Medical Center for burn injuries sustained in Operation Iraqi Freedom, addressed the new medical specialists, introducing them to the types of patients they will be helping. He told them they have a significant influence on the future of wounded Soldiers.

“I hope by coming to speak, the new officers get a better understanding of what patients go through,” Martinez said. “I want them to understand the long-term effects of what they do and how their care

helps a wounded Soldier in the long run.”

Retired Cpl. Robert Jackson, a bilateral amputee and national spokesman for the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes, accompanied Martinez, encouraging the new officers to be more than a caregiver. “You all will be counselors as well as medical specialists. I didn’t expect to be able to talk to my therapists, but it happened,” he said.

Martinez said being injured and starting from square one is a mentally challenging task. Injured Soldiers may have to relearn the basic activities of life. Martinez said medical specialists push Soldiers to get better when they are discouraged.

“Being a therapist will be frustrating at times. You are not our

friends when we are in (intensive care unit),” Martinez said to the therapists. “It’s not until later that we appreciate your work.

“Personally, I want to thank you for your commitment and dedication,” he added. “You may have not been involved with my case specifically, but you will be taking care of someone just like me as your career progresses.”

“Listening to the guest speakers was an inspiration,” said new medical specialist, 2nd Lt. Jessica Siu. “It gave me insight into the other side of our work; this whole experience really makes me feel I am a part of a bigger picture.”

Many corps members came out to support their newest colleagues. “I came because I wanted the new officers to see all the different ranks that support them as they enter their new career field,” said Capt. Elizabeth Barnaby, Landstuhl Regional Medical Command in Germany.

“I hope by being here, it sets them at ease and helps them go forward with motivation and enthusiasm,” she said. “Mentorship is a part of leadership, and by attending tonight, I want them to know that they have my support.”

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIQUIDATE YOUR CREDIT CARD DEBT?**

**IT CAN HAPPEN.**

The Financial Readiness Program at Army Community Service offers this service. For more information, call 221-1612.

